

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TRIPOL 00060 151430Z

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1883

S E C R E T TRIPOLI 0060

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LY

SUBJECT: DELIVERY OF NOTE IN ANSWER TO LIBYAN PROTEST
OF ACTIVITIES OF SIXTH FLEET AIRCRAFT

REF: STATE 8469

1. CHARGE DELIVERED NOTE CONTAINED IN REFTEL THIS MORNING TO HUSNI SHAABAN, DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, ALONG WITH ARABIC TRANSLATION.
2. SHAABAN'S FIRST REACTION WAS TO REMARK ON CONTRADICTION BETWEEN OUR VERSION OF FACTS AND LIBYAN VERSION. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 10 AND 25 MILES, AND "THIS NEEDS CLARIFICATION", HE SAID. HE WENT ON, AT OUR URGING, TO RE-READ LAST PARA OF NOTE, WHICH EXPRESSES READINESS FOR "DIALOGUE", AND COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON IT. HE SAID HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY PASS NOTE ON TO "OFFICE CONCERNED", WHICH WE TAKE TO MEAN RCC.
3. SHAABAN THEN MADE POINT THAT RECENT AMERICAN AND OTHER PRESS REPORTS HAD ADDED TO FEARS OF U.S. MILITARY INTERVENTION IN LIBYA, AND HAD CREATED CLIMATE IN WHICH APPEARANCE OF U.S. MILITARY AIRCRAFT OFF LIBYAN COAST HAD TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY LIBYAN AUTHORITIES. LIBYANS DID NOT BELIEVE EVERYTHING THEY READ IN PAPERS, BUT REPORTS HAD CUMULATIVE EFFECT. HE MENTIONED FRENCH TELEVISION PROGRAM ON SIXTH

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PAGE 02 TRIPOL 00060 151430Z

FLEET AND ARTICLES IN ITALIAN PRESS ABOUT U.S. MANEUVERS IN

SOUTHERN ITALY. HE RAISED SECRETARY'S BUSINESS WEEK INTERVIEW, AND TO CHARGE'S QUESTION, SAID HE HAD READ COMPLETE TEXT IN ENGLISH CAREFULLY. IT WAS NOT AS BAD AS IT HAD BEEN MADE TO SOUND BY SOME PRESS ACCOUNTS, HE SAID. HE POINTED OUT (ACCURATELY) THAT LIBYAN MEDIA HAVE NOT MADE AN ISSUE OF SECRETARY'S STATEMENT.

4. NOTING NEED TO GIVE CONCRETE EXPRESSION TO GENERAL STATEMENTS OF WILLINGNESS TO HAVE "DIALOGUE", WE TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT ORALLY TO SHAABAN CONTENTS OF SECRETARY'S MESSAGE TO OPEC GOVERNMENTS (STATE 7457). SHAABAN TOOK NOTES, AND SAID HE WOULD BRIEF UNDERSECRETARY DURDAH. WE HAVE NOW DELIVERED TO HIM TEXT OF AIDE MEMOIRE CONTAINED IN STATE 7457.

5. COMMENT: LIBYAN FEARS OF INVASION BY US ARE REAL. ANSWER WE GAVE MFA TODAY WILL GO PART WAY TOWARD LAYING LIBYAN SUSPICIONS OF OUR INTENTIONS TO REST, BUT SOME NERVOUSNESS WILL PERSIST. WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND POINT OF EXERCISES JAN 10, AND HOPE THEY WILL NOT BE REPEATED. STEIN

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NNN

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